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ABSTRACT

Given research findings that women have a strong tendency to describe the ideal man as androgynous, perhaps social interaction with an androgynous male could be seen as a social reward, whereas interaction with a masculine male may be less rewarding or aversive for women. A study was conducted to determine the functional properties of androgyny as a reinforcer of a behavioral response in a procedure analogous to instrumental conditioning. Ten situations were presented as items for discussion. Two prerecorded comments were constructed for each situation, one conveying stereotypic masculine responses and one conveying androgynous responses. Female college students (N=44) listened to the masculine speaker and pressed a switch to hear the androgynous speaker. In the continuous reinforcement condition, the androgynous speaker addressed all 10 situations. In the partial reinforcement condition, although subjects performed the instrumental response each time, the androgynous speaker only addressed five situations. Following completion of trials, subjects answered a post-conversation questionnaire. The results revealed that all subjects acquired the instrumental response and that performance among subjects in the partial reinforcement group was impaired relative to subjects in the continuous reinforcement group. The androgynous male was judged to be more likeable, intelligent, and moral than his masculine counterpart. (NB)

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Reinforcing Functions of Androgyny:
Partial Reinforcement

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PURPOSE

The present investigation considered recent research which had demonstrated a greater liking for androgynous persons relative to masculine persons (e.g., Bridges, 1981; Jackson, 1983; Major, Carnevale, & Deaux, 1981). Beyond being more socially attractive, androgynous men may be more romantically attractive as well (Kulik & Harackiewicz, 1979; Orlofsky, 1982). In fact, many studies have demonstrated the strong tendency on the part of women to describe the "ideal" man as androgynous in his sex-role orientation (e.g., Deustch & Gilbert, 1976; Kimlicka et al., 1982; McKee & Sherriffs, 1959). Given these findings, perhaps social interaction with an androgynous male can be conceptualized as a social reward, whereas interaction with a masculine male may be less rewarding and perhaps even an aversive social experience for women. The less rewarding or aversive nature of the masculine male is implied not only by the aforementioned findings, but also by studies which have demonstrated that the masculine male is liked even less than men who are characterized by a feminine sex-role orientation (Korabik, 1982).

Previous sex-role and androgyny research has relied extensively on self-report measures. These measures have been used to assess the subject's sex-role, the subject's evaluations of stimulus material, and the manipulation of stimulus persons. The present study represents a dramatic departure from this tradition. The subject's evaluation of the stimulus person(s) were gathered via self-report methods, but these variables did not assume primary importance in the experimental design. The express purpose of this study was to determine the functional properties of androgyny as a reinforcer of a behavioral response in a procedure analogous to instrumental conditioning.

METHOD

Forty-four female undergraduate volunteers recruited from General Education courses at California State University served as subjects. The subjects ranged in age from 18 to 52 ($M = 24$). The first independent variable was the percentage of reinforcement: the number of trials on which a male speaker spoke in an androgynous fashion (100% vs. 50%). The conversation trials constituted the second independent variable. The major dependent variable was the subject's response speed (100/latency).

Ten common situations were presented as items for discussion (e.g., contending with a car in need of repair, babysitting, choosing a career). Two prerecorded comments were constructed for each situation: one conveying stereotypic masculine responses and another imparting androgynous responses. Each dialogue was constructed to be approximately 30 s in length.

The subject's portion of the experimental apparatus consisted of an microphone headset and a 45.72 cm x 30.48 cm x 7.62 cm module positioned on the table approximately 50 cm from the subject. The subject's module was constructed of plywood and contained four transparent mirror glass windows, five behavior change buttons and a spring-back toggle switch.

The subject was informed that she was the Listener in a three-person conversation. After the subject read and signed the consent form, the experimenter explained that the study was designed to investigate interpersonal communication. The experimenter disclosed that the variable of interest was self-reported behavior change resulting from listening to two other people comment on a variety of topics.

Over the headset the experimenter explained that during the course of the experiment she would describe several common situations. It was further explained that after the situation was read, both Speakers would be given the opportunity to report how they had behaved in this sort of situation in the past or how they think they would behave if the situation ever arose. The subject was led to believe that the Speakers could not hear each other's comments. The participants were further informed that after Speaker 2 finished his comments, the "Behavior Change" signal would light up automatically and they were then to indicate the likelihood of changing their behavior in the future for the situation just discussed.

In all conditions an experimental trial began with the experimenter asking a question to be answered by the speakers. This was followed by the illumination of the "Listen to Speaker 1" signal on the subject's module and the simultaneous initiation of the masculine speaker's tape recorded passage. When the comments were completed, the tape was stopped and the "Listen to Speaker 1" light was extinguished. At this time the conditioned stimulus signal ("Press switch when ready to hear Speaker 2 comment") was turned on, and the latency timer was initiated.

When the subject performed the instrumental response, the latency timer stopped. In the continuous reinforcement condition the instrumental response resulted in the

illumination of the "Listen to Speaker 2" window and the initiation of the androgynous speaker's tape recorded passage; this was the case on all 10 conversation trials. The instructions for the partial reinforcement condition were similar to those used in the continuous reinforcement condition. The notable exception was that it was stated that Speaker 2 would be required to comment on only certain situations. The subject was still required to perform the instrumental response, but she was informed that in the event that Speaker 2 was not required to comment there would be a brief pause and the "Listen to Speaker 2" signal would not be illuminated. Thus, on 5 of the trials only the masculine speaker was heard.

When the androgynous speaker's comments ended on a reinforced trial, the "Listen to Speaker 2" window darkened and the "Behavior Change" signal was illuminated. When 25 s of silence had elapsed on a non-reinforced trial, the "Behavior Change" signal was illuminated. The experimental trial was complete when the subject indicated her choice on the 5-button behavior change panel.

Following completion of the trials, the subject completed the post-conversation questionnaire. During the debriefing phase the experimenter answered all questions to the subject's satisfaction and offered to send her the results of the experiment.

RESULTS

As expected, Speaker 1's comments were rated as more traditionally masculine than Speaker 2's comments ($M = 6.75$ vs $M = 2.61$), $F(1,42) = 329.06$, $p < .001$. And, Speaker 2's comments were rated as more traditionally feminine than Speaker 1's comments ($M = 3.86$ vs $M = 1.29$), $F(1,42) = 91.86$, $p < .001$. The subjects' evaluations of the masculinity and femininity of the Speakers' personalities followed a similar pattern. Speaker 1 was rated as more masculine than Speaker 2 ($M = 5.91$ vs $M = 3.59$), $F(1,42) = 57.38$, $p < .001$, and Speaker 2 was rated as more feminine than Speaker 1 ($M = 3.52$ vs $M = 1.55$), $F(1,42) = 56.94$, $p < .001$.

The subjects' mean evaluations of the masculine and androgynous speakers' comments and personalities are presented in Table 1. The similarity between the ratings by the subjects in the partial and continuous reinforcement conditions permitted collapsing across this variable. The subjects rated the comments made by the androgynous speaker as significantly more appropriate than the comments made by

the masculine speaker. Subjects also rated the androgynous speaker as being significantly more likable, intelligent and moral than the masculine speaker. Interestingly, the masculine speaker was rated as more heterosexual than the androgynous speaker, however, both speakers were judged to be on the heterosexual end of the continuum.

Figure 1 shows the response speeds for the continuous and partially reinforced groups. As predicted, the speed of the instrumental response was an increasing function of the number of reinforced trials, with the continuous group showing superior performance to the partially reinforced groups.

The subjects' latencies were transformed into speeds by the reciprocal transformation ($\text{speed} = 100/\text{latency}$) for each trial. A 2×10 repeated measures analysis of variance (Groups $\times$ Trials) revealed a significant trials effect, $F(9,378) = 6.85$, $p < .001$. When subjects were presented the opportunity to listen to an androgynous male after hearing a traditional masculine male, response speeds increased across the ten trials. This result is important in that it indicates that learning occurred. A significant groups effect was also observed, $F(1,42) = 4.49$, $p < .04$. Simple main effects tests conducted across the ten trials for each experimental group revealed that both groups acquired the instrumental response: $F(9,189) = 4.61$, $p < .001$, for the 100% group; $F(9,189) = 5.19$, $p < .001$, for the 50% group.

CONCLUSIONS

1. In the context of a learning paradigm, the opportunity to listen to a male speaker deliver information that is androgynous in content displays the functional properties of a conventional reinforcer:
 - a. All subjects acquired the instrumental response.
 - b. Performance among subjects in the partial reinforcement group was impaired relative to subjects in the continuous reinforcement group.
2. Consistent with previous research, the androgynous male was judged to be more likable, intelligent and moral than his masculine counterpart. The comments made by the androgynous speaker were also judged to be more appropriate than the comments made by the masculine speaker.

Table 1

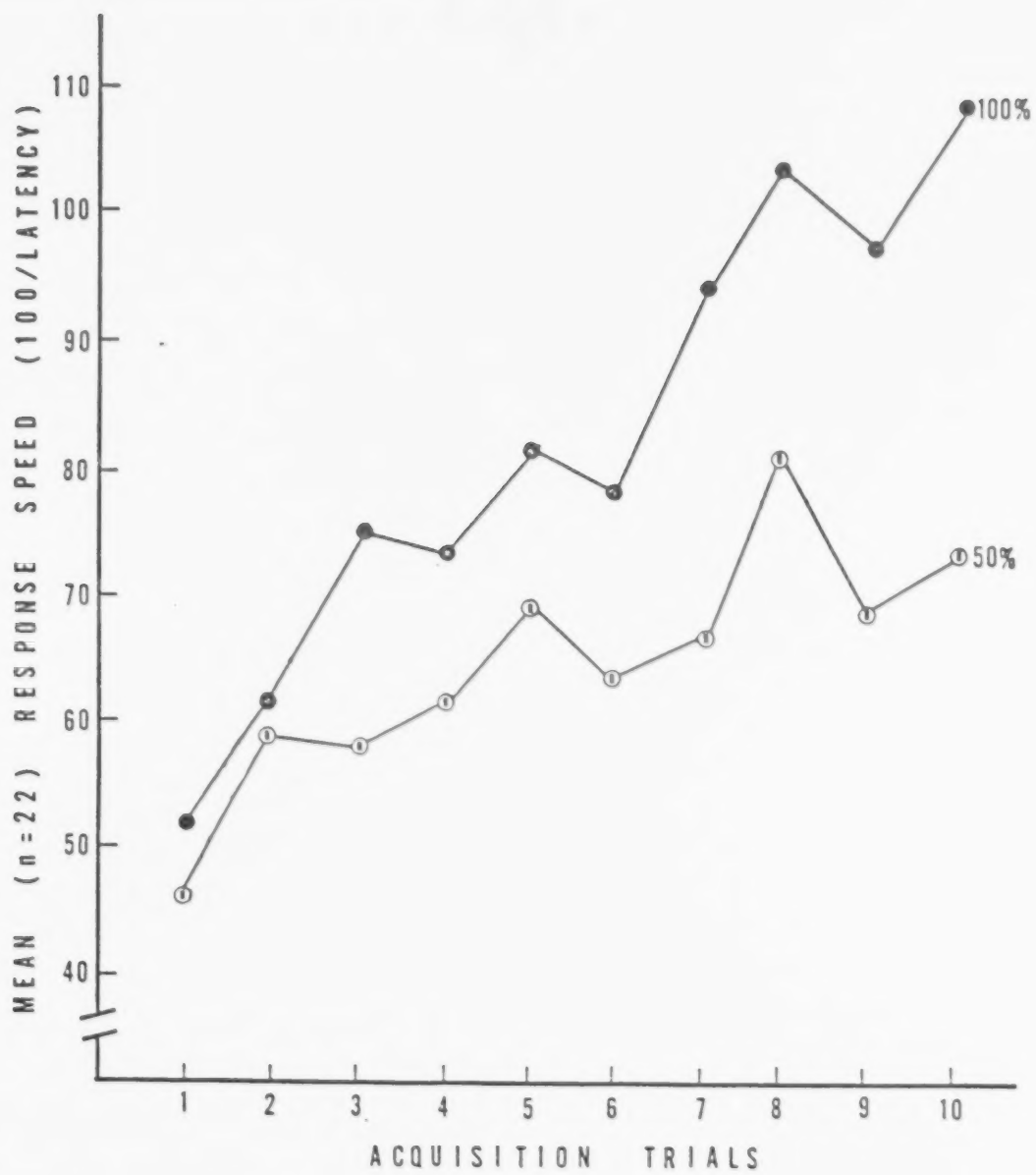
Evaluations by Continuously Reinforced and Partially Reinforced Subjects of Masculine and Androgynous Speakers and Their Comments

EVALUATION ITEM	MASCULINE SPEAKER	ANDROGYNOUS SPEAKER	TEST STATISTIC $F(1,42) =$
Clarity of comments	5.36	5.14	N.S.
Masculinity of comments	6.75	2.61	329.06, $p < .001$
Appropriateness of comments	4.18	5.21	13.88, $p < .001$
Honesty of comments	5.32	5.93	N.S.
Femininity of comments	1.29	3.86	91.86, $p < .001$
Likableness	3.18	5.61	64.85, $p < .001$
Masculinity of person	5.91	3.59	57.38, $p < .001$
Intelligence	4.48	5.07	4.76, $p < .001$
Morality	4.36	5.48	18.79, $p < .001$
Femininity of person	1.55	3.52	56.94, $p < .001$
Mental health	5.16	5.23	N.S.
Heterosexuality	6.43	5.50	9.98, $p < .01$

Note: N = 44. Mean ratings reflect a scale of 1 = Not Very to 7 = Very.

Figure 1

Acquisition Curves Under Partial and Continuous Reinforcement



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